

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00552 241747Z
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0552

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EG SO ET IV TS
SUBJECT: TUNISIAN VIEWS ON POSSIBLE NEW APPROACHES
TO HORN DISPUTE

REF: STATE 001381

1. MY DISCUSSION WITH HEDI NOUIRA ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A
NEGOTIATED SOLUTION TO THE SOMALI-EHIOPIAN CONFLICT PROVED
UNCHARACTERISTICALLY BRIEF, BUT CHARACTERISTICALLY PRAGMATIC.
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IN THE FORTNIGHT SINCE I HAD REQUESTED A MEETING WITH
THE PRIME MINISTER, HE HAD SPENT FIVE DAYS IN PARIS,
PARTICIPATED IN PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE'S WORKING VISIT
AND, AS PSD SECRETARY GENERAL, PRESIDED AT THE RECENT
TWO-DAY MEETING OF THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THE
SUBJECT MATTER OF OUR QUERY AND THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION
OF THE PROBLEM ARE ONES THAT, PREDICTABLY, EXCITE LITTLE

CONCRETE INTEREST OR SENSE OF IMMEDIACY FOR TUNISIA.

2. OUR DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE HORN OF AFRICA COVERED SOMEWHAT MORE GROUND THAN IS REPORTED HERE BECAUSE OF TWO LONG DIGRESSIONS BY NOUIRA REGARDING A CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE AT CAIRO AT AN ARAB LEAGUE MEETING AND ANOTHER WITH PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE LAST WEEK ON THE WESTERN SAHARA PROBLEM WHICH SEEMED TO NOUIRA IN MANY RESPECTS ANALOGOUS. BRIEFLY, NOUIRA BELIEVES THAT THE MASSIVE ROLE BEING PLAYED IN ETHIOPIA BY THE USSR ABSOLUTELY DEMANDS AN AMERICAN COUNTER-PRESENCE. WHEN THE SUPERPOWERS ARE INVOLVED THERE IS LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE THAT SMALL AFRICAN STATES LIKE TUNWSIA CAN CONTRIBUTE. HE WAS PLEASED TO SEE THE US TAKING AN INTEREST IN THE CONFLICT, HOWEVER, AND HOPED WE WOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED BY THE DIFFICULTY IN REACHING A SOLUTION.

3. TUNISIA, AS I KNEW, HAS NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA, SAID THE PRIMIN. IT IS THE GOT'S POLICY TO SUPPORT THE ERITREAN REBELLION AND TO SUPPORT THE RECTIFICATION OF SOMALIA'S FRONTIERS, NOUIRA EXPLAINED, AND HE WAS HAPPY TO KNOW THAT THE U.S. SEEMED TO REALIZE THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION PRODUCED AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACCOMPLISH THE LATTER AT LEAST. THIS SHOULD BE A MINIMUM OBJECTIVE, HE THOUGHT, LEST SOMALI IRREDENTISM FESTER YET FOR DECADES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND BE A CONFIDENTIAL

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SOVRCE OF CONSTANT FRICTION.

4. ANOTHER FACTOR OF THE USG TO WEIGH IN MAKING UP ITS MIND HOW TO INTERPOSE ITSELF -- AS IT MUST -- IN THE HORN AGAIN IS THE PROBABLE LACK OF VIABILITY OR LONGEVITY OF THE PRESENT ETHIOPIAN LEADERSHIPM PERHAPS, HE MUSED, IT WOULD BE BEST JUST TO WAIT A FEW MONTHS UNTIL THE ADDIS ABABA GOVERNMENT IS CHANGED. ANOTHER FRUSTRATION THAT CAN MORE EASILY BE REMOVED IS TO OBLIGE SIAD BARRE AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO COME OVER WHOLLY TO THE CAMP OF THE MODERATES AND PRO-WESTERN STATES. (HE HAD LECTURED PRESIDENT BARRE ON THIS POINT LAST YEAR IN CAIRO BUT FEARED THE SOMALI LEADER WAS SLOW TO LEARN).

5. NOUIRA VIEWS IRANIANLAND SAUDI INVOLVEMENT ON SOMALIA'S BEHALF GENERALLY TO THE GOOD BUT, AS AN ARAB, RESENTS THE INTRUSION OF IRAN INTO "ARAB" AFFAIRS. HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS POINT WITH GISCARD D'ESTAING LAST WEEK IN PARIS. GISCARD WAS MORE RELAXED ABOUT THE NEW ROLE OF THE SHAH AND PROFESSED TO SEE THE EMERGENCE OF "AN IRANIAN-ISRAELI-SAUDI-MOROCCAN AXIS" WHICH FRANCE BELIEVES COULD PROVE TO BE A FORCE FOR STAGILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. (I HAD

TO LET THIS NEW CONCEPT PASS WITH ONLY A QUIZZICAL LOOK
ON MY FACE.)

6. WHEN I EXPLAINED THAT THE USG HAD NO INTENTION OF
TRYING AGAIN TO PERFORM THE POLICEMAN ROLE IN BLACK
AFRICA, NOUIRA SIGNIFIED HIS UNDERSTANDING, BUT REITERATED
HIS BELIEF THAT THE U.S. "HAS TO BE THERE, IF ONLY BECAUSE
THE SOVIETS ARE THERE". OAU MEMBERS, HE STATED, EVEN IF
THEY COULD ALL WORK IN UNISON, A CLEAR IMPOSSIBILITY NOW, COULD
ONLY PLAY HELPFUL ROLES IF THE US WILL GIVE THE LEAD.

7. COMMENT: I HAD FRANKLY EXPECTED BETTER OF NOUIRA,
PARTICULARLY SINCE I LEARNED NEARLY A WEEK AGO THAT HE HAD
SENT THE ORIGINAL MOFA TALKING PAPER BACK FOR MORE WORK.
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PERHAPS WE EXPECTED TOO MUCH FROM HIM AND THE GOT AT THIS
TROUBLED POLITICAL JUNCTURE IN THEIR DOMESTIC HISTORY.
HOWEVER, IN FAIRNESS TO NOUIRA, HE TOOK A TYPICALLY
REALISTIC TUNISIAN POSITION: (A) OF MINIMAL TUNISIAN
INVOLVEMENT; (B) OF RELIANCE ON THE US TO GET THE SOVIETS
OUT OF THE HORN; (C) OF LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE OAU'S
SENSE OF MISSION OR PURPOSE AND (D) OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR
ABILITY TO HELP PAVE THE WAY TOWARD A SOLUTION.
MULCAHY

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